

## Author Spotlight Patrick O'Brian

While his novels and the film are pure escapism for 21st century armchair admirals, Patrick O'Brian also tried to escape from his own history.

He was born on December 12, 1914, the youngest of eight children and the son of a doctor. His family name was Russ and his first home was in Buckinghamshire, England. The Russ family moved around the country as their fortunes dwindled.

O'Brian's first novel was published when he was only 15. He wrote short stories about India as he grew up and moved to London. There he married and the couple had two children. O'Brian left the children and their mother in the spring of 1940 for reasons that are not clear.

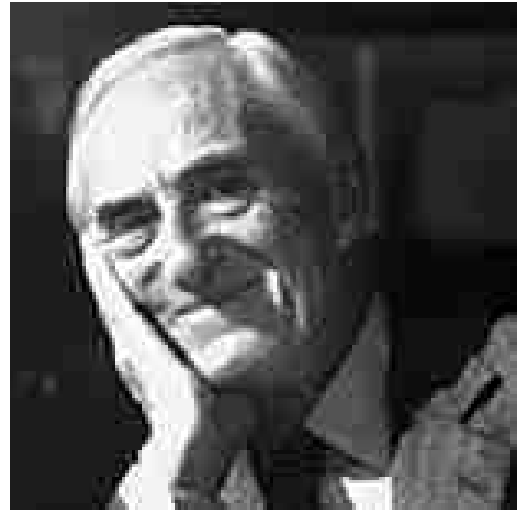
During the Second World War he found work as an ambulance driver and then as an employee in the Political Warfare Executive, an intelligence and propaganda organization within the Foreign Office. It seems likely his work supported resistance operations in France.

When peace broke out, he changed his name from Russ to O'Brian and married Mary Tolstoy. After several moves, the couple settled in Collioure, on the French Mediterranean coast. He wrote novels, short stories, biographies and translated works from French to English.

His first Aubrey/Maturin book was published in 1969 although success was modest until the 1990s when the series became the publishing miracle of the decade. More than three million copies have since been sold. The series starts with *Master and Commander*. Sadly, O'Brian's death ended the series with *Blue at the Mizzen*, just when it looked like the Napoleonic series might extend to the American Civil War.

O'Brian allowed a myth to spread that he was an Irishman and even accepted an honorary doctorate from Trinity College, Dublin, where the myth was widely believed. It wasn't until 1999 that his Englishness, his original family name and his past were exposed in a national newspaper.

Patrick O'Brian died on January 2, 2000 in the Fitzwilliam Hotel, Dublin, having written three chapters of the 21st novel in the Aubrey/Maturin series. He was a brilliant storyteller, in his life and in his novels.



## **The Aubrey/Maturin Series**

*Master and Commander*  
*Post Captain*  
*H.M.S. Surprise*  
*The Mauritius Command*  
*Desolation Island*  
*Fortune of War*  
*The Surgeon's Mate*  
*The Ionian Mission*  
*Treason's Harbour*  
*The Far Side of the World*  
*The Reverse of the Medal*

*The Letter Marque*  
*The Thirteen Gun Salute*  
*The Nutmeg of Consolation*  
*The Truelove*  
*The Wine-Dark Sea*  
*The Commodore*  
*The Yellow Admiral*  
*The Hundred Days*  
*Blue at the Mizzen*

## **Patrick O'Brian fans may also enjoy...**

Bernard Cornwell  
C. S. Forester  
W E B Griffin  
Alexander Kent  
Dewey Lambdin  
Philip McCutchan  
James L. Nelson  
Charles Nordhoff  
Arturo Perez-Reverte

Dudley Pope  
Douglas Reeman  
James Rollins  
Richard Sharpe  
Nevil Shute  
Julian Stockwin  
Victor Suthren  
Richard Woodman

## **This non-fiction book is an excellent guide to O'Brian's Aubrey-Maturin novels.**

King, Dean

*Harbors and High Seas: An Atlas and Geographical Guide to the Aubrey-Maturin Novels of Patrick O'Brian* - 823.914 O'B